
Children at a school in Italy have today begun an experiment to replace all their books with personal computers. The pupils involved will each be given a special laptop that contains their entire curriculum. From Rome our correspondent Duncan Kennedy reports:

Until today, the Don Milani di Rivoli **elementary school** in central Turin was like any other. Children **turned up**, got out their books and pens and began the process of learning. But now, in what's being described as a unique experiment, 60 fifth-**grade** pupils and a number of third-graders, will start using computers only.

The mini-laptops, which run Windows software, all have a full **curriculum** programmed into them. The pupils will use the computers to do all their reading and writing. Security systems within the laptops mean the children's **access to** the internet is strictly controlled. The machines weigh less than a kilogram, can be dropped from a height of 1.5 metres and **are waterproof**.

Instead of spending **the equivalent of** 700 dollars a year on books, the laptops, built by the Italian company Olidata, cost less than 400 dollars. One of the teachers **involved in the scheme** says that, for the first time, schools will be able **to verify** in a scientific way how a computer alone can improve the learning process. The experiment, which has the **backing** of parents, is due to last a year.

Duncan Kennedy, BBC News, Rome

Vocabulary and definitions

elementary school	a school that provides the first part of a child's education (usually for children aged 5 - 11)
turned up	here, came to school
grade	a class or group of classes in a school where all the children are of a similar age and/or ability
curriculum	all the subjects taught at a school, college, university etc. The word 'curriculum' can also be used to mean the same as 'syllabus', i.e. the topics or books studied within a subject
access to	here, ability to surf/search/use
are waterproof	cannot be damaged by water
the equivalent of	the sum of money that amounts to>equals
involved in the scheme	taking part in the experiment
to verify	to prove that something is true or not
backing	support, encouragement

More on this story: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/technology/7642985.stm>

Read and listen to the story and the vocabulary online:

http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/newsenglish/witn/2008/10/081008_italy_laptops.shtml